

Welcome to the Michigan Commission for the Blind



To help you
choose the
MCB services
that are
right for you,
contact the
Michigan
Commission
for the Blind
toll-free at
1-800-292-
4200.

The Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) believes in the capacity of people who are blind or visually impaired to achieve employment and independence. MCB provides training and other services that empower people to achieve their individual goals.

If you live in Michigan and you're blind or visually impaired, the Michigan Commission for the Blind will work with you to define your goals and identify appropriate training and other services. Funded by federal and state taxes, MCB provides counseling and training in skills for daily living without vision. Depending upon your needs and eligibility for specific services, we may also provide some types of adaptive equipment, computer software, and postsecondary education.

To be eligible for MCB services, you must be legally blind, which means that you meet at least one of these criteria:

- Visual acuity with best correction must be 20/200 or worse in the better eye, or
- Visual fields must subtend an angle of less than 20 degrees in each eye, or
- Visual acuity with best correction must be 20/100 or worse in the better eye with a prognosis of rapid deterioration.

(The Youth Low Vision Program has different eligibility requirements, which are listed in the Youth Services section.)

MCB's training and other services can be provided in your home, at a Mini Adjustment Training seminar held at various locations around the state, and/or at the Michigan Commission for the Blind residential training center in Kalamazoo. You and your MCB counselor or teacher will work together to develop a personalized training plan that will help you gain new skills, confidence, and a positive attitude about your abilities.

Here's some brief information about the programs and services available:



Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The purpose of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is to help you become employed in a career that suits your current or potential skills and abilities. MCB provides diagnostic evaluations, vocational counseling, and training in skills of blindness at no cost to you. Depending upon your needs and eligibility, additional services may include low-vision equipment, vocational training, technical school training, a college education, job development and placement, and follow-up. If you're a homemaker, this program can help you learn how to do your everyday tasks without sight.



Independent Living Program

If you're age 55 or older and you want to continue living at home as self-sufficiently as possible, the Independent Living Program is for you. If there are things you can't do anymore because of vision loss, you can learn how to do many of these things again, safely and effectively, without using vision. MCB teachers are trained specialists in this field who will work with you to help you accomplish your goals. Services include training in skills of blindness such as orientation and mobility (to get around independently in your home, your community, and beyond), Braille (for labeling, reading, and writing by touch), kitchen skills (such as how to use the stove and oven safely and effectively), and leisure activities (including Braille or large-print playing cards and board games). MCB also provides information on community resources, recreational activities, and peer support groups.



Youth Services

Through the Youth Low-Vision Program, MCB provides low-vision eye exams and some types of low-vision devices, including telescopic and microscopic glasses, complex contact lenses, light-filtering eyewear, prescription sports goggles, bifocals, and prismatic lenses. This program is available to youth from birth to 26 years of age with an acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye with best correction, or with a restricted field of 20 degrees or less. To enroll, contact your intermediate school district teacher consultant for the visually impaired.

The Transition Program helps students age 14 and over to successfully transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment, based on the student's goals. Each student works with a team that may include the student's MCB rehabilitation counselor, parents, teacher consultant, social worker, special education director, or others to prepare an Individualized Education Program (IEP) describing the classes and activities for the upcoming school year.



DeafBlind Services

With the Michigan Commission for the Blind, people who are DeafBlind receive Vocational Rehabilitation or Independent Living services that are specifically tailored for people who are both deaf and blind. DeafBlind services staff work closely with other public and private organizations and community partners to identify and serve individuals who are DeafBlind throughout the state of Michigan.

If you participate in this program, you may also participate in MCB's Intervenor Program, in which an independent contractor provides one-on-one services to a specific individual, focusing on developing daily living skills and vocational skills. These services may be provided in the workplace, at home, and/or in the community.



Business Enterprise Program

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is the state-federal program established in 1936 to train people who are blind or visually impaired to provide catering and operate vending stands and cafeterias in state and federal buildings, highway rest stops, and visitor centers. If you're interested in opportunities of this type, you should enroll as a client in MCB's Vocational Rehabilitation Program and express your interest in the Business Enterprise Program. The BEP program includes training in marketing, sanitation, bookkeeping, product management, and equipment repair and operation, as well as the laws, regulations, and policies that apply to operating your own BEP food service business.



MCB Training Center

The residential MCB Training Center serves approximately 400 people each year age 16 and older who are enrolled in MCB programs. No one is ever too old to go to the MCB Training Center. All teaching and counseling services, as well as room and board, are provided at no cost to those attending the center. Length of stay is based on individual goals.

The center is staffed by instructors who have received extensive training specifically in teaching people who are blind or visually impaired. Staff provide training in a variety of subjects, based on student needs, which may include the following:

- Personal adjustment to blindness
- Braille and other communication methods
- Orientation and mobility (finding your way indoors and outdoors, using a cane or dog, accessing public transportation, etc.)
- Adaptive kitchen skills, including safe use of adaptive devices and techniques
- Computers
- Industrial arts
- College prep and technical training
- Business Enterprise Program (food service entrepreneurship)
- Crafts and leisure activities



Business Services

The Michigan Commission for the Blind works directly with businesses, creating solutions that work. MCB provides services, at no cost to employers, to help them retain or hire blind or visually impaired employees who are well-qualified to do the job. MCB services to employers include job analysis, technical assistance, adaptive equipment for the employee, on-the-job evaluation and training, orientation, job coaching, follow-up, and information on employer tax credits. In addition, MCB may pay a portion of the employee's salary during an initial on-the-job training period.



Contact Us

The Michigan Commission for the Blind has offices in Lansing, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Flint, Escanaba, Gaylord, and Kalamazoo, as well as the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo. Services are provided by staff from these offices to individuals and businesses in all of Michigan's 83 counties. For more information about the Michigan Commission for the Blind, please contact us:

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Michigan Commission for the Blind

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